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NEA/ARP FOR BRIAN SHUKAN, INL FOR JOHN LYLE

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SUBJECT: INCSR 2006: SAUDI ARABIA SUBMISSION

REF: STATE 154898

¶1. (U) In response to reftel, Post submits its 2006
International Narcotics Control Strategy Report. BEGIN TEXT:

¶I. Summary

Saudi Arabia has no appreciable drug production and is not a significant transit country. Saudi Arabia's conservative cultural and religious norms discourage drug abuse. The Saudi Government places a high priority on combating narcotics abuse and trafficking. Since 1988, the Government has imposed the death penalty for drug smuggling. Although it is believed that drug abuse is increasing, drug abuse and trafficking do not pose major social or law enforcement problems. However, Saudi officials acknowledge that illegal drug consumption and trafficking are on the rise. This rise has caused increased arrests and governmental controls over the past year. Saudi and U.S. counter narcotics officials maintain good relations. Saudi Arabia is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention.

II. Status of Country

Saudi Arabia has no significant drug production, and in keeping with its conservative Islamic values and 1988 UN Drug Convention obligations, it places a high priority on fighting narcotics abuse and trafficking. Narcotics-related crimes are punished harshly, and narcotics trafficking is a capital offense enforced against Saudis and foreigners alike. During 2006, approximately 20 executions for narcotics-related offenses were reported in the Saudi media. Saudi Arabia maintains a network of overseas drug enforcement liaison offices and state-of-the-art detection and training programs to combat trafficking. While Saudi officials are determined in their counter narcotics efforts, drug trafficking and abuse is a growing problem. Since the Saudi government provides no statistics on drug consumption, interdiction, and trafficking, it is difficult to substantiate this assessment with hard data. Newspaper reports indicated that there are about one hundred and fifty thousand drug addicts and users in the Kingdom. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that Saudi Arabia's relatively affluent population, large numbers of idle youth, and high profit margins on smuggled narcotics make the country an attractive target for drug traffickers and dealers.

The Saudi Government undertakes widespread counter narcotics educational campaigns in the media, health institutes, and schools. The government also blocks internet sites that it deems to promote drug abuse. Government efforts to treat drug abuse are aimed solely at Saudi nationals, who are remanded to one of the nation's four drug treatment centers in Riyadh, Jeddah, Dammam and Qassim. Al-Amal hospital in Riyadh has an in-patient rehabilitation center for women. Additionally, media reports and Saudi officials noted that the Ministry of Health planned to open an in-patient rehabilitation center for female addicts in the Jeddah branch of Al-Amal hospital at the end of 2006. As of this report, the center had not yet been opened. The hospital currently

treats female drug abusers as outpatients. The women branch at the General Presidency for Fighting Narcotics was established in 1988 and had only one female employee. Currently, it has 40 female staff members. Expatriate substance abusers are jailed and summarily deported. Health officials confirm anecdotal reports of an increase in drug abuse, but note that most addictions are not severe due to the scarcity of available narcotics and their diluted form. Saudi narcotics officials said that Keptagon, Heroin, Hashish and Qat are the most heavily-consumed substances, but Saudi officials report that cocaine and amphetamines are also in demand. Paint/glue inhalation and abuse of prescription drugs are also reported.

III. Country Actions Against Drugs in 2005

Policy Initiatives. The lead agency in Saudi Arabia,s drug interdiction efforts is the Ministry of Interior, which has over 40 overseas offices in countries representing a trafficking threat. In addition, the Saudi Government continues to play a leading role in efforts to enhance intelligence sharing among the six nations of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Accomplishments/Law Enforcement Efforts. Saudi and U.S. drug enforcement officials exchange information on narcotics cases. Drug seizures, arrests, prosecutions and consumption trends are becoming more a matter of public record. Contrary to previous years, illegal narcotics seizures by Saudi officials appear frequently in local newspapers.

Corruption. There is no evidence of involvement by Saudi Government officials in the production, processing or shipment of narcotic and psychotropic drugs and other controlled substances. However, newspapers reported in August 2006 that one Saudi officer and two border guard policemen were beheaded for drug distribution and smuggling. Anecdotal evidence suggests that drugs are widely used in Saudi prisons in which certain officers are involved in selling and distribution.

Agreements and Treaties. Saudi Arabia is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and the 1961 UN Single Convention as amended by its 1972 Protocol. Saudi Arabia signed the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime in 12 December 2000 and ratified it in 18 January 2005.

Cultivation/Production. Cultivation and production of narcotics in Saudi Arabia is negligible. However, one incident reported in the media indicated that the National Guard in Madina raided a house after cannabis was discovered in the yard.

Drug Flow/Transit. Saudi Arabia is not a major transshipment point. Officials say that there are stricter control measures practiced by the country and therefore more seizures.

Keptagon and Heroin are smuggled into the Kingdom,s from the northern border with Jordan. Hashish is smuggled into the Kingdom from its north-eastern borders with the United Arab Emirates, and Qat is smuggled into the Kingdom from its southern borders with Yemen.

Domestic Programs (Demand Reduction). In addition to widespread media campaigns against substance abuse, the Saudi Government sponsors drug eradication programs directed at school-age children, health care providers and mothers. The Ministry of Civil service will begin requiring applicants for civil service positions to take a drug test as of January 12007. Executions of convicted traffickers (public beheadings which are widely publicized) are believed by Saudi officials to serve as a deterrent to narcotics trafficking and abuse. The country,s influential religious establishment actively preaches against narcotics use, and Government treatment facilities provide free counseling to Saudi addicts.

IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs

Bilateral Cooperation. Saudi officials actively seek and participate in U.S.-Sponsored training programs and are receptive to enhanced official contacts with DEA. Saudi Arabia is part of the International Combating Office in Cairo that works closely with the US combating agencies.

Road Ahead. The U.S. will continue to explore opportunities for additional bilateral training and cooperation.

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